

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

April 2, 2009

The Honorable John P. Murtha, Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
Room H-149 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young, Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Murtha and Ranking Member Young:

On behalf of the estimated 1.77 million American families affected by autism spectrum disorders (ASD, hereafter referred to as autism), we write on World Autism Day to thank you for your leadership in including \$8.0 million for autism research in the Fiscal 2009 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, and respectfully request that you provide \$15 million Fiscal 2010 Defense Appropriations bill.

Many DoD families are touched by autism. The most recent prevalence data indicate that 1 in 150 children have an autism spectrum disorder. Based on this prevalence rate, as many as 12,000 children in military families (active duty, reserve and guard) may have autism. These families are affected substantially by the financial and emotional costs of raising a child with autism.

Autism's impact also extends to the performance and readiness of service members who have children with autism and their units. A service member with a child with autism may be restricted in terms of assignments and 'deployability,' thus potentially placing a higher burden on others who serve.

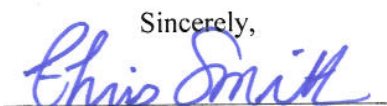
Moreover, the military life is particularly difficult for children with autism and their families. A specific feature of autism is extreme difficulty coping with disruption of routine or environment. Therefore, these children need a set routine, stability, and continuity of services and relationships. Military life by its nature provides few of these needs. Frequent changes of residence and schools, and the prolonged absences of a parent make life much more difficult for the child with autism and his or her caretakers. When one parent is away, the spouse or other caretaker at home must bear both the normal burdens of that situation, and the additional challenge of raising a child with autism facing extraordinary stresses. This situation is likely to weaken the morale of the parent serving in the military as well as the caretaker at home.

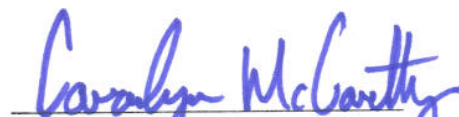
For these reasons, we feel strongly that the autism epidemic warrants an additional investment via the Department of Defense. It is well known that children with autism, if they receive prompt treatment and early intervention services, can improve their long-term functional prospects dramatically. Additional research will help to improve treatment and intervention. The results will directly serve the interests of DoD families touched by autism as well as the medical, educational, healthcare and service professionals who serve the needs of the autism community within and beyond DoD.

Autism places tremendous health, financial, and emotional strains on our nation's families, including those in the military, and the problem will only worsen unless an all-out research campaign is launched to discover causes, enhance therapies and, ultimately, prevent or cure autism. With the number of Americans diagnosed as having autism or ASD continuing to rise at an alarming rate, Congress must redouble its commitment to increasing and enhancing the federal government's contribution to autism research.

We thank you for considering this most important request. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Kenneth DeGraff in the office of Rep. Doyle at (5-2135), Tim Lynagh in the office of Rep. Chris Smith (5-3765), or Michael Grogan in the office of Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (5-5516).


MIKE DOYLE
Member of Congress

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress


CAROLYN MCCARTHY
Member of Congress

Christopher P. Cox

~~John~~

Madeline J. Brubaker

~~John~~

Kathy Costa

Rn Klein

Joe McNulty

Joe Courtney

Rn Paul

Alfred J. J. J.

Jim Sanger

Chels W. Dunt

~~Joe~~

Jim McDermott

~~Barry~~

Rn Ellen

Paula

Kinda J. Sanchez

Rn Kind

Jim Van der Veld Abercrombie

Edward J. Markey

Alan E. Cline

Ray A. Hoffman

Joe R. L.

Carol B. Maloney

Bart Gordon

Rn Burt

Melanie Waters

~~John~~

John L. Bunde

Dennis J. Kucinich

Heena Rao-Lehtinen

Bill Pascrell Jr.

Patricia

Carol Shea-Porter

R. A. Mue Devin Halverson Barry Gunk

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April 2, 2009

The Honorable David Obey, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0005

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services and Education
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0005

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

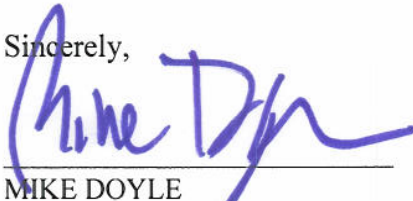
On behalf of the estimated 1.5 million American families affected by autism spectrum disorders (ASD, hereafter referred to as autism), we thank you for your leadership in providing significant increases for autism in previous appropriations bills and we are writing to urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to fully fund the third year of this five-year authorization bill, the Combating Autism Act (CAA) in your Fiscal 2010 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Autism is increasing at epidemic proportions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it now strikes 1 in 150 of America's children, making it more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. It occurs in all racial, ethnic and social groups. Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and related to others, and remains a life-long burden, not only for those who have been diagnosed, but for parents and other family members as well.

For Fiscal 2010, the CAA authorizes a total of \$211 million for a variety of critical autism activities, including: (1) \$20.5 million for the CDC to conduct its Developmental Disabilities Surveillance and Research program; (2) \$47 million for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to carry out autism education, early detection, and Intervention programs; and (3) \$143.5 million for the HHS Secretary and the NIH to operate the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, implement the expansion, intensification and coordination of research on ASD, and fund and review autism centers of excellence.

Again, we ask for your support in the Fiscal 2010 Labor-HHS bill for autism surveillance, treatment and services, and research as authorized by the Combating Autism Act. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Kenneth DeGraff in the office of Rep. Doyle at (5-2135), or Tim Lynagh in the office of Rep. Chris Smith (5-3765).

Sincerely,



MIKE DOYLE
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress

Christopher P. Cof

~~Mike~~

Jim M. King

Alfred Dyke

~~Robert~~

Paul E. King

Arthur J. King

~~Paul King~~

Edward J. Markey

Dan Burton

~~Paul King~~

Heather Rao-Lehtinen

Carol Shea-Porter

~~Paul King~~

Kathy Castor

Joe Courtney

Jim Langevin

Jim McAnulty

~~Paul King~~

Chad E. Cierco

Ken A. Waxman

Carolyn B. Maloney

John M. McHugh

Paul L. Berman

Bill Pascrell Jr

Dennis H. Johnson

Madeline J. Bordallo

Mr. Klein

Mr. Paul

Charles W. Dost

Isabel J. Sanchez

Ron Kind

Neil Abernethy

Lyn Boh

Bart Gordon

Melanie Waters

Dennis J. Flaherty

~~Paul King~~

Benny Frank